
The Monthly Magazine Of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

WELCOME

It seems only a short time ago that we were venturing out for the first runs of 2009, yet already the summer solstice has passed. This has been a great season for club ride outs and there are loads more to come. See below for the next few events.

Since the last issue of **BikeBytes** we've had my Chip Shop run to Biggar, Ken Glendinning's Border Reivers run, Ken Eddie's Five Counties run and the 10 Lochs run led by Judy Broad.

The BMF Kelso Bikefest is rapidly approaching and arrangements are being made to transport the club's new gazebo to our pitch at the showground and no doubt Kelso will be a hot topic at the July club night. The Bikefest is a good opportunity to promote the club but it is also a very enjoyable social occasion – come along if you can. Several of us plan to take tents and stay for the whole weekend.

Events planned for July:

Kelso Bikefest. Kelso Border Union Showground. 10th to 12th July.

Ken Eddie's South Loop Run on Sunday 19th July, meeting at Strathclyde Country Park, 9.45am.

Ken Eddie's 50th Birthday BBQ on Saturday 25th July, 58 Ochiltree, Dunblane FK15 0DF. 2pm till late. Ken has generously extended an invitation to all. To help Ken with the planning, if you intend to go, please email him at chair@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk and let him know how many people you will be bringing.

As always, please log in to the website at www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk for all the latest news, run reports, photos etc.

Steve MacKinnon

EDITORIAL

Welcome to a, rather late, sunny July edition of **BikeBytes**.

Work commitments at the moment means that this issue should just reach you before the next club night...which I won't be at as I'll be 'down-south' again! Special apologies in this issue go to Steve Middleton, who wrote a profile for inclusion in last month's edition, but there wasn't enough room. This time, it still doesn't make it in as I'm writing this in an office in St. Ives in Cambridgeshire and Steve's article is on my home PC in Edinburgh....sorry Steve!

So, not much biking being done at the moment, but I guess we all have times like this. Anyway, I'm really looking forward to the Bikefest at Kelso this weekend and crossing my fingers for good weather. There always seems to be a good atmosphere at Kelso and it's great just hanging around with other bikers...aren't we a varied lot!!

Something that occurred to me recently about biking is how invisible we seem to be to a large number of car drivers. Now, I'm not exactly small, and my 955 Tiger isn't exactly a 'pocket-rocket', but some car drivers seem to quite happily pull out in front of me as if I'm see through. Now I just expect a car to pull out and ride accordingly...I'm sure you all know what I mean.

I've tried to make myself more visible....I wear a white helmet, my headlights are on all the time (courtesy of the Triumph 'extra relay mod') and I've fitted Philips 'Motovision' bulbs, which have an distinctive orange tinge. I know a few people that have made their bikes look like police bikes, with reflective panels etc., but it looks a bit too nerdy for my liking. Maybe I should invest in a lighter colour riding jacket, but I did buy a cream coloured Triumph jacket at the bike show a few years back and it just looked filthy after a few rides.

What do you do to make yourself look more visible on a bike? If you have any tips like this, or tales of 'close encounters' with car drivers, why not send in a short piece and we'll get it stuck into the next edition.

Contact the Scottish Motorcycle Club via the Membership Secretary:

Steve MacKinnon

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I'm investigating new formats for **BikeBytes** to make it more readable online, as I suspect that's how most people read it these days. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

Enjoy YOUR magazine!

Ken Glendinning

Chairman's Bit



Having failed to make the "print" deadline for last months **BikeBytes**, due to holidays and various travels connected with work, I thought I'd better get something prepared in good time this month, particularly as I have

another work related trip starting tomorrow, this time to Marseille in France. Just looking down our kitchen calendar, since my last "story" in **BikeBytes**, I've been to Louisiana USA, Humberside, Singapore, Coventry and a biking holiday with Fiona up around the North coast and Orkney. Hectic!! The upside though is that other than Singapore, and travelling tomorrow to France they have only really taken me away during the work week, and so I've managed six of the ten runs that have been organised over May and June. The four I've missed were the May and June chip shop runs, Ken Glendinning's Border Reivers run, (which sounds like it was really good), and the Ten Lochs tomorrow, which Judy is leading. It's a shame that I'll miss that, as I've always enjoyed it in the past.

Our holiday up North was quite enjoyable. Weather was a bit "iffy" early in the week, but by the time we were making our way back down on the Thursday and Friday, it was glorious. We started off on the Sunday by joining Judy's Seil Island run, saying our goodbyes after an excellent lunch at the Tigh an Truish Hotel, beside the Atlantic Bridge. We then headed up through Oban to Fort William, and carried on North to our first night stop in Ullapool. About 300 miles that first day, and both quite wearied as it had been very cold for most of it. The last 20 miles or so heading into Ullapool was quite sunny, thankfully, and a nice meal had us back on the "up". Next day, after a hearty breakfast we continued North and took in the wonderful scenery, and pretty good roads, up through Durness and Tongue ending up in Castletown, East of Thurso. Next morning, we headed over to John O'Groats for the obligatory photo opportunity, and also stopped in at the Castle of Mey for a mooch about the gardens. Well worth a

visit if you're in that area. Backtracked over to Scrabster to get our ferry to Orkney, after which we visited the Skara Brae Neolithic village. On the Wednesday, our one full day in Orkney, we headed right down to the Southern tip of South Ronaldsay in VERY windy conditions. Sights taken in were the Tomb of the Eagles (a 3000bc burial site that has been excavated), the Italian POW chapel, the Churchill Barriers (you can't help but see these, as they form the road to South Ronaldsay), a winery, and finishing the day with a nice meal in Kirkwall. On the Thursday, after our ferry trip back to the mainland, with the weather picking up, we had a great run down through Wick and past the Cromarty and Dornoch coasts, night stopping at Aviemore. With even better weather on the Friday, it was a gentle run home, putting 980 miles on for the week. Just for good measure, I took Sarah on Steve Middleton's run to Galloway on the Saturday, led by Janet and John. Quite a week really.

As I write this, I'm not long back from a two hour "bikesafe" assessment ride with Central Scotland Police traffic department. Really good. The police rider doing it gave a fairly good initial assessment, with really constructive feedback, and was pretty happy in the second half that I'd applied some of his tips, particularly in gear selection, and I felt I'd come out of it with a few pointers to "hone". I'd highly recommend any of you, if you've not already done one, to contact your local traffic department and ask for an assessment ride. It's free, and in my view, an excellent initiative.

<http://www.bikesafe.co.uk/Bikesafe/Bikesafe2000/scotland.html>

And so to July. Kelso month. We've done the trial build up of the new club Gazebo in preparation for the Kelso weekend, and organisation is underway. Final details will be given at the July club night, and will be on the web-site. We look forward to seeing members dropping by the club tent for a "cuppie" and a natter over the weekend, and, hopefully, attract some new members too.

The eagle eyed of you will have spotted in the club calendar a Barbecue at my place later in July. While this is not a "dedicated" SMC event, you are most welcome to drop by. Full details are now in the events calendar on the website. Just to help us a bit with planning, an e-mail to chair@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk would be appreciated if you do plan to come.

Rideouts planned for July are a Chip Shop run on the 2nd (which I'll miss again, being in France), to be led by Steve Middleton. Some brave souls, myself included, are taking a "day trip" to Northern Ireland, courtesy of a cheap deal on Stena Ferries on the 5th. I am leading a run on the 19th heading south toward the borders, and back up the East Coast. Also, there

has been some interest expressed for half-day runs, particularly on Saturdays, so we are going to try to accommodate this over the rest of the season, even if there is already a full run arranged for the Sunday (or vice-versa). Keep an eye on the events calendar on the website.

See you on the ride outs.

Ken Eddie

Kawasaki Versys 650

I picked up my new Kawasaki Versys 650 on 25th April, the first brand new bike I'd bought since 1994. I'd also ordered a set of 35L panniers which, although badged 'Versys', are made by Givi. After the very basic Kappa panniers I had on the Transalp, the Givi items seemed quite sophisticated and well made.

Running in wasn't too much of a chore. For the first 600 miles I had to keep the revs down to 4000rpm which equated to 55mph in top gear. From 600 to 100 miles I was 'limited' to 6000rpm. Since this gives really spirited acceleration through the gears and 80mph in top, I've rarely, if ever, explored the rest of the rev range.

I've now covered 2600 miles and can see both good points, and bad, in the Versys.

Likes:

Light weight. About the same as the Transalp.

Seat Height. Slightly lower than the TA, but still quite high.

Nimble handling. The Versys has 17" cast wheels and road tyres. The Transalp has a 21" front wheel, spokes and narrow trail bike tyres. The difference this makes on the road is amazing. I feel the Versys can enter a corner at much higher speeds and greater lean angles than I'd have dared on the Transalp. There is a vague hint of super-moto in the Versys styling and, with the wide handlebars and trail bike stance, Kawasaki seem to have built a little 'responsible hooliganism' into the mix, which makes the bike great fun to ride.

Power/acceleration. This might seem over the top on a bike which only claims 64hp, but the difference to the TA is remarkable – the Versys accelerates impressively. Oddly enough, I'd test ridden a Bonneville a few weeks previously and although it has a few more horsepower than the Versys, it felt sluggish by comparison.

Economy. It was a disappointment that the Transalp never gave better than 53mpg. The Versys returns a regular 64mpg and has a range of over 200 miles.

Space. There is more room for rider and pillion which is great. That said, after a whole day out two up, on the Five Counties run, severe numb bum had definitely set in.

Incidentally, I don't want to seem too hard on the Transalp. It's a good motorcycle and would be the better bike off-road.

Dislikes:

These are annoying details rather than major faults.

Heel guards. The thin silver paint on the metal heel guard casting starts to wear off immediately on leaving the dealer's showroom. Within 200 miles from new they looked scuffed. Completely unacceptable and a sore point with all Versys owners.

Fairing buzz. Again, something that afflicts almost every Versys sooner or later (usually around the 600 miles mark when the thin, sponge dampening material which sits between two plastic panels wears through). It's an easy fix but the noise is intensely irritating and for it still to be an issue on a bike which has been on sale for a few years smacks of a couldn't-care-less attitude from Kawasaki.

Instrument display. Every other liquid cooled bike I've ever seen has a temperature gauge but the Versys has only a warning light to inform you if the engine overheats. The digital display can be cycled through four modes but three of them don't show the clock.

Split pin. I think it was about a decade ago that Honda stopped using split pins to secure the rear axle nut, instead adopting a much more sensible self-locking item. The Versys continues to use these cheap and nasty pins.

Does that read like a lot of moans? Maybe, but the good points vastly outweigh the bad and I'm very pleased with the bike. If you can live with the slightly odd looks, it is both a practical and enjoyable motorcycle.

Fellow club member and silver Versys owner, Pete Rutherford, collected his new bike on the same day as I did, though from a different dealer. Pete has added a touring screen, engine guards and, recently, an Ermax hugger. The hugger looks a quality piece of kit, with well matched silver paint. Luckily for Pete, the dreaded fairing buzz has not appeared on his bike so far.

Steve MacKinnon

BMF KELSO SHOW 11 & 12 JULY

We'll have the new club gazebo at Kelso this weekend, so why not drop down and join us. Kelso Bikefest is a great event and even if we don't get any new members, it's a great excuse to get together.

Fingers crossed for good weather!!



Last year saw a 30% increase in attendance, and if the weather is good there is no finer place to be. The local roads are great for biking and there is usually a ride-out organised on the Saturday. The trade stands offer some bargains if you are selective, and the arena show is usually good.

Details can be found on the BMF site here (<http://www.bmf.co.uk/Events/pages/kelso.php>) but to

summarise; a day ticket is £8 for us as BMF Affiliated Club members (see your SMC membership card for the Club reference number if you need it) bought in advance. Camping is £19 for members in advance, for two nights, including the evening entertainment.

Run Reports

Well, as usual, no-one has sent any this month....However, members are loading lots to the club website, so why don't you log-on and read some of the recent run reviews at:

<http://www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk/>

Articles for BikeBytes

You've probably noticed that it's the 'usual suspects' that submit most of the **BikeBytes** articles. I'm sure that there must be a few others itching to have their say, so scribble a few lines on any bike related subject and send it to me at the email address below.

bikebytes@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

Just one funny picture this month, his sheepskin seat cover seems a bit too 'fresh'!

